

Sunday School

REVIEW LESSON

Sunday, June 20, 1909.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."—Acts 4: 33.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 60. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such wordly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

1. **Peter and Cornelius.** Acts 10: 1-20. **Golden Text.**—"In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."—Acts 10: 35.

2. **Peter Delivered From Prison.** Acts 12: 1-11. **Golden Text.**—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Ps. 34: 7.

3. **The Conversion of Saul.** Acts 9: 1-19. **Golden Text.**—"He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me."—Acts 9: 4.

4. **The Gospel in Antioch.** Acts 11: 19-30. **Golden Text.**—"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."—Acts 11: 26.

5. **Paul's First Missionary Journey.—Cyprus.** Acts 13: 1-12. **Golden Text.**—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—Mark 16: 15.

6. **Paul's First Missionary Journey.—Antioch in Pisidia.** Acts 13: 13-16, 38-49. **Golden Text.**—"The word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."—Acts 13: 49.

7. **Iconium and Lystra,** **Golden Text.**—"All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens."—Ps. 96: 5.

8. **The Council at Jerusalem.** Acts 15: 1-5, 22-29. **Golden Text.**—"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved, even as they."—Acts 15: 11.

9. **Believing and Doing.** James 2: 14-26. **Golden Text.**—"Faith without works is dead."—James 2: 20.

10. **The Power of the Tongue.** James 3: 1-12. **Golden Text.**—"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."—Prov. 21: 23.

11. **Heroes of Faith.** Heb. 11: 17-29. **Golden Text.**—"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—Heb. 11: 1.

LESSON COMMENTS.

The lessons of this quarter have a grouping. It is the opening of the work of Foreign missions. The first seven chapters of the Acts (last quarter's lessons) tell of the opening of the work of evangelizing Judea. It has presented the commission which Christ gave to the disciples, "Go ye into all the world." It has told us how they discharged that duty in Jerusalem, and how they were treated in consequence.

Now the second quarter opens with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus whom God had selected to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

Necessarily there would be much antagonism to the idea of presenting the Gospel to idolaters and to receiving them into the Church of Christ without circumcision or acceptance of the Jewish ritual. In order to meet this, God pauses to give the very strongest intimations of his will in the matter.

1. He makes the conversion of Saul conspicuous by the special appearance of the risen Christ to him. The circumstances of Saul's conversion were such as to give authority to his whole mission. Over and over does Paul plead this in the presence of one tribunal or another, and always with effect.

2. Almost simultaneously with the appointment of Paul to the foreign work, God calls Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, up to the housetop to receive the vision of the "great sheet" and to hear the message, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Of this, like the former, we have a thrice repeated record, so as to make it prominent and sure. And the command to welcome the Gentiles was given not to Paul, but to Peter, the Jew.

3. In the last verses of Acts 11, God records the surprising fruitage of the Gospel among the idolatrous Greeks at Antioch in Syria. It took the Church by surprise; it also gave them great pleasure. They saw in it the promise of Isaiah 2, that "all nations shall flow unto" the Church of God.

4. In the early verses of Chapter 13, we have another step, which in like manner was marked by the obvious seal of God. "The Holy Ghost" gave a special command on the subject. And the subject was, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work" of carrying the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. As the orders came distinctly from the Holy Ghost, there could be no questioning of them.

5. God gives us next a picture of the oppositions which we must expect in preaching the Gospel. In the island of Cyprus, they met with the wiles of Elymas, the sorcerer. When they reached Perga, on the south coast of Asia Minor, they met with exposures so great that the courage of John Mark failed and he abandoned them. We are not surprised. Barnabas and Saul were starting up a narrow defile, from Perga to the uplands of Asia Minor, so narrow and steep that a footpath could not be arranged on either side of the stream, but ran alternately on the east bank and the west bank, crossing the stream every little while on a log. If a rain should come, swelling the stream into a torrent, the luckless traveler would be utterly cut off, being unable to go back or forward, and possibly unable to climb some very steep mountain side and be drowned. We are not surprised that John's courage failed him.

And the prospect before them was of violence. Some centuries before, when Alexander the Great had marched through these uplands of Galatia the thievishness and the boldness of the mountaineers had been so great that they stole the very camp kettles of the army. If they would act thus in the presence of an army, how would they treat two or three lonely evangelists? The sequel tells how they did treat them, for Paul was stoned and left on the ground for dead.

6. Next comes the return to Jerusalem. After going north from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia (here study your maps), and east to Iconium and Lystra and Derbe the apostles retraced their steps to Perga and back to Antioch in Syria, and thence to Jerusalem. Everywhere the report of their fruitfulness in the Gospel gave the greatest joy. It meant the extension of the Church.

7. The narrative tells us how careful were these apostles to leave behind them a well organized church in each town, and it shows that the plan was just that which has been followed in the Presbyterian Church, and which is the distinctive mark of Presbyterian Church government. In Acts 14: 23, we read, "When they had ordained them elders in every church." Notice that they arranged for a government of these churches not by the congregation, but by elders.

8. Lastly our course of lessons this quarter settles for us the propriety of having an appellate court in the Church to settle disputed points, and the obligations which rest on the lower courts to respect the decisions of this appellate court. For the question whether the Gentiles must be required to keep the Mosaic law was referred to this appellate court, and when it rendered a decision, it sent down that decision to the churches "for to keep." And this example is the basis of our church government today.